

THE ARRANGEMENT, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICES OF THE GROUPS

- There must be leadership within the groups, but it should not be organized or official
- The core members of the group should all bear the burden for the group as leaders according to their particular burden and portion
- We must not form groups merely according to age, condition, or geography, but by much study and in a way that enlivens the members
- We need to learn how to divide our group once it reaches a certain number so that it can become two groups

THE PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE GROUPS

The matter of leadership in the groups is very practical. It will be very difficult for us to have the proper practice of the group meetings if we have no leadership at all. However, we do not want to have any organized leadership in the groups.

The wrong concept of the leadership is abominable in the eyes of the Lord. In the seven and a half years of study that we have had concerning the group meetings, we have taken the basic principle of not arranging or organizing anything. The group meetings must be organic. Likewise, we have taken the principle of having no official leadership. I said repeatedly that in the group meetings everyone is a leader. However, those who initiate and form the groups must provide some practical leadership. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 5)

EVERY MEMBER MAKING THE GROUP LIVING AND ACTIVE TO GAIN OTHERS

We have to make our group meetings so interesting. If our vital group meetings are full of truth, are living, and if we intimately love one another in the group, this will be a big attraction. We must have a living, active vital group.

Everyone should bear a burden for the vital groups. Do not despise your burden and your portion. If a new one comes into a group meeting, and all the members of the group meeting speak, he will be surprised and

attracted. Our group meetings must be living and active, with all the members in the group speaking.

According to my experience, the most attractive thing is the thorough fellowship. In your vital groups you must always practice the thorough, intimate fellowship. This brings in the mutual care in love. If a new one comes to our group and sees this kind of intimate, open, thorough fellowship and mutual care, he will be inspired. He would say that he has never seen people who are so one and who love, open to, and care for one another so much. He would say, "This is the place where I should be. I have to be among these people." This kind of intimate fellowship and care for one another attracts people, so we have to practice this. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 24)

PRINCIPLES FOR GROUPING THE SAINTS

In grouping the saints together, we do not need to legally follow a certain way. We can group the saints together according to the Spirit and according to the situation. In certain instances it may be more convenient to group the saints by geography. However, in some situations that way may not yield the best result. It may be better to group people according to the situation, taking into account factors such as geography, age, status, character, and spiritual condition. In some situations grouping the young ones together with the old ones may not be a help to the young ones, but in other instances grouping the young ones with certain elderly saints will make the young ones more living. It would not be good to group seven people of weak character together, nor would it be good to group too many people of strong character together. In grouping the saints, the elders need to study the situation of all the saints.

In forming the groups, all preferences should be annulled. According to our past experience, some of the saints have a strong preference to be together. However, we need to realize that a particular group may stay together for only six months. After six months the groups should increase to the point that they need to divide into two groups. Thus, we should forget our personal preferences. In some cases if a husband and wife are put in different groups, they will be made alive and they will be more able to help

others. We need to put all these matters into our consideration, and we need to learn. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 7)

THE PRACTICE IN THE GROUPS

According to what principle should the groups be formed? We should not form the groups merely according to geography or according to the saints' age, and we surely should not do it according to preference. The way of choosing according to self-interest always brings in death.

In the beginning we can set up the groups with seven or eight members. Then within a year each group should double, at which point they should be divided, one group of sixteen becoming two groups of eight.

The most necessary requirement for grouping together is intimacy. After a number of weeks the seven or eight members of a group should become one person in a thorough intimacy. Then within this inner circle of intimacy the group should practice the fellowship and also the feeding. The matter of fellowshiping requires a great deal of study and practice because we either do not have fellowship, or we come together merely to gossip.

We also need to practice intercession, that is, to pray for one another. Intercession depends on and is based on fellowship. Following intercession we need to practice the mutual shepherding and caring for one another. Shepherding is implied in the caring for one another. Then we should practice teaching one another in mutuality. This kind of teaching is very similar to feeding. We should not have just one man teaching; rather, we should practice mutual teaching through mutual inquiry and mutual answering. If we allow only one man to teach, the rest will not be able to practice prophesying. The way of mutual teaching is a foundation of the practice of prophesying. In the group meetings we need to build up all these things.

The length of the group meetings should be approximately ninety minutes or, at the most, two hours. We can divide the meetings into four sections, each section lasting about twenty minutes. The first twenty

minutes should be for fellowship, and the succeeding twenty-minute sections should be for interceding, shepherding, and teaching, respectively. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 6)

Fellowship Questions:

1. What does it mean that the saints who initiate and form the groups should provide practical leadership? Who are these ones in your group?
2. In what sense is everyone in the group a leader? How may this be connected to making our group attractive so that we can gain others?
3. What are some principles in grouping the saints? What does it mean that we should not be grouped according to our preference?
4. What are the key sections of the practices of the group meeting identified in this portion? Consider with your group how you practice these matters, and how your practice could be advanced.